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WIDENER



HN SVSU S

THS

ABOUT MONARCHS

HANSARD WATT

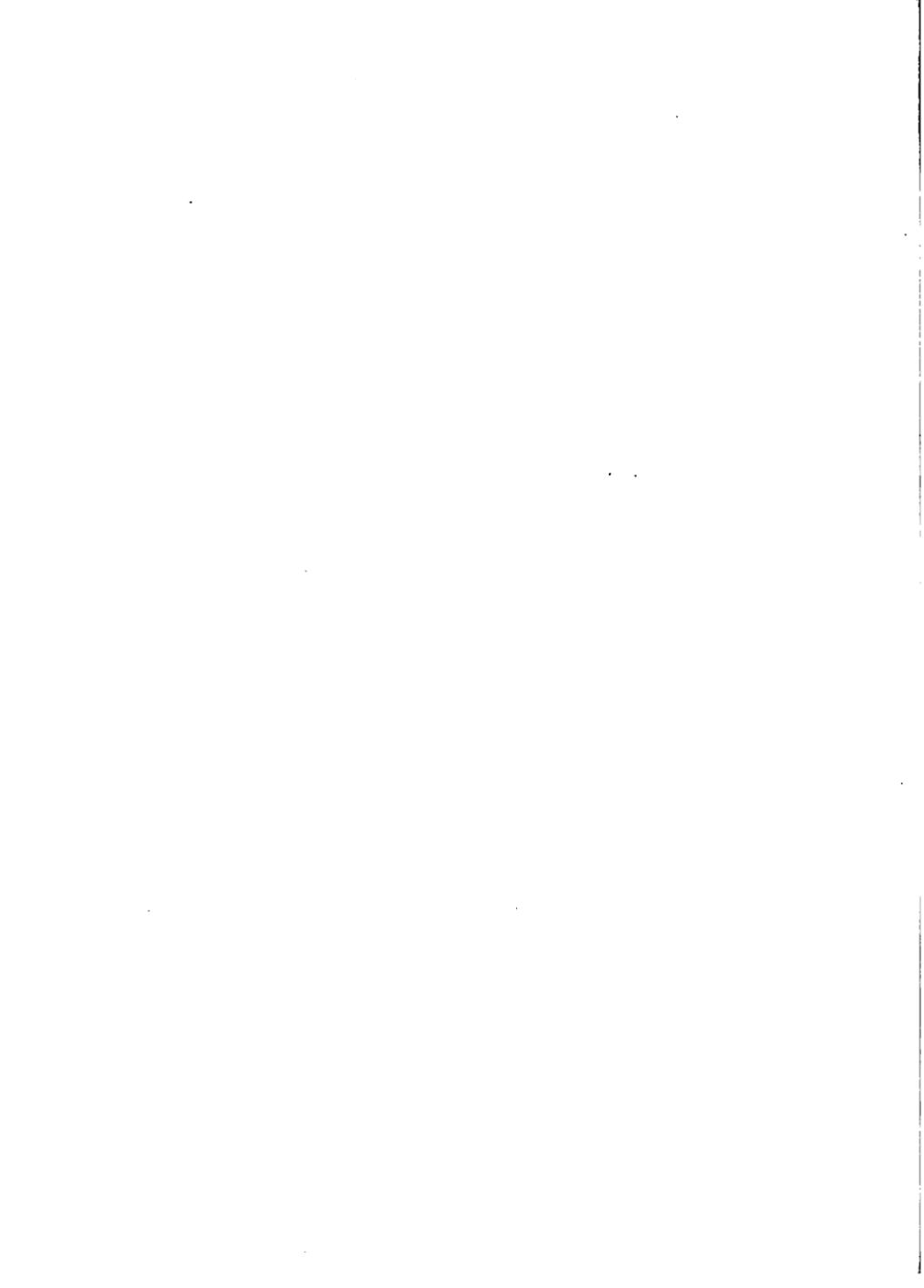
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## **MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS**

JAQUES : More ! I prithee, more.

AMIENS : My voice is ragged ; I know I cannot  
please you.

JAQUES : I do not desire you to please me ; I do  
desire you to sing.

*As You Like It.*

# MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

BY HANSARD WATT

AUTHOR OF "HOME-MADE HISTORY" *etc.* *etc.*



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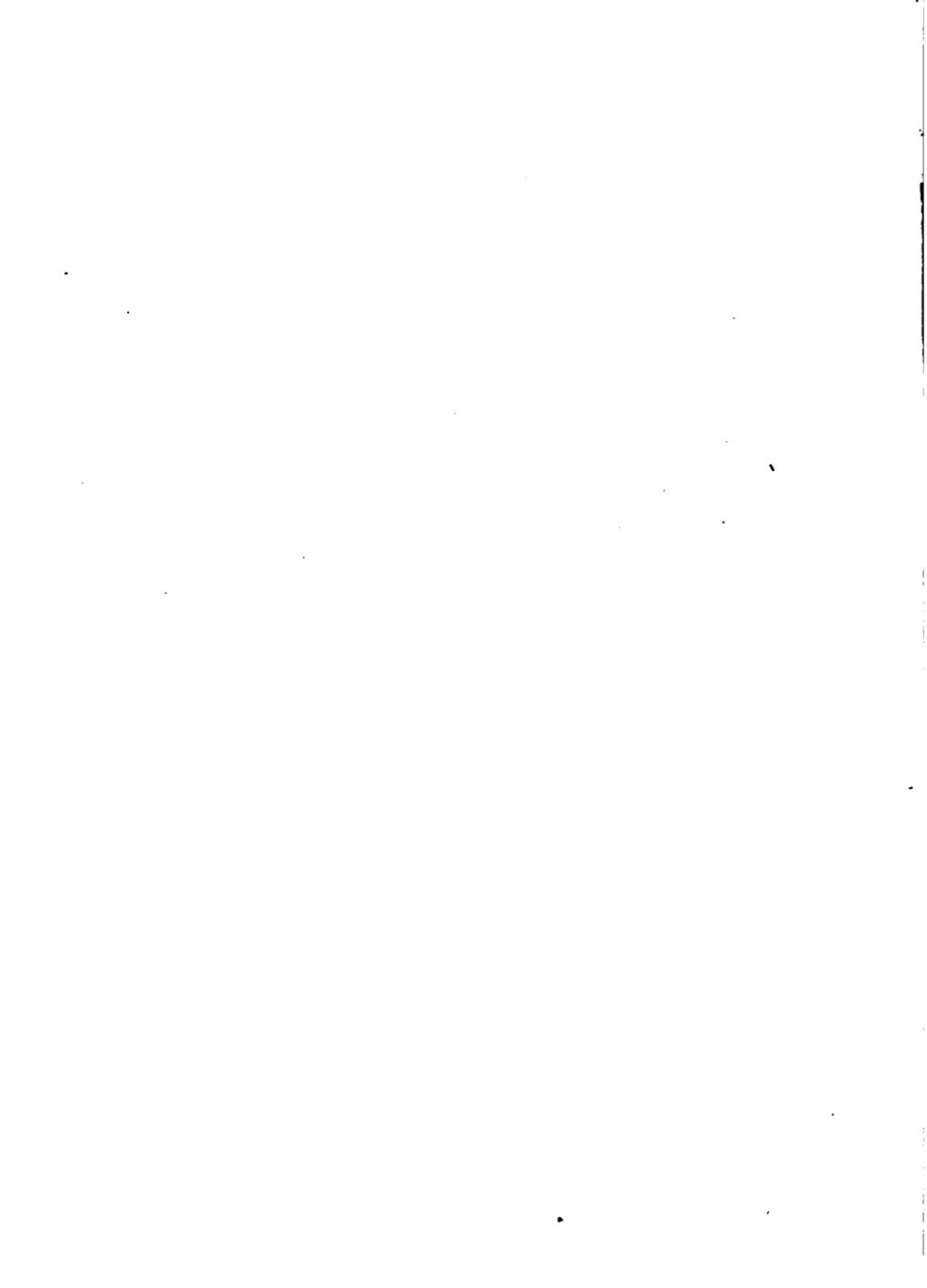
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Feb. 14, 1933

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## NOTE

For permission to reprint these verses  
I have to thank the Editors of *The  
Westminster Gazette*, *The Novel Maga-  
sine*, *The Grand Magasine*, *The London  
Magasine*, and *Cassell's Magasine*.  
"Polycrates" is published here for the  
first time.



TO

**J. W. G.**

AND

**E. W. D.**



## PREFACE

There may be some who, if constrained to look  
Within the covers of this little book,  
Shall, seeing verses, shut it with a snap,  
And, flinging it aside, remark, "Poor chap!"  
"Why is it people waste their time," they say,  
"In this abysmal, idiotic way?  
If they have any worthy tale to tell,  
How A. or B. set forth, and what befell,  
How this one play'd his little part in life,  
Or that one woo'd a not unwilling wife,  
Why not proclaim their puppets' joys or woes  
In sober and unsentimental prose?"

Such people think, and doubtless they are right,  
That minor poets should be shot at sight ;  
But are they, when they advocate these views,  
Aware how many trifle with the Muse ?

## PREFACE

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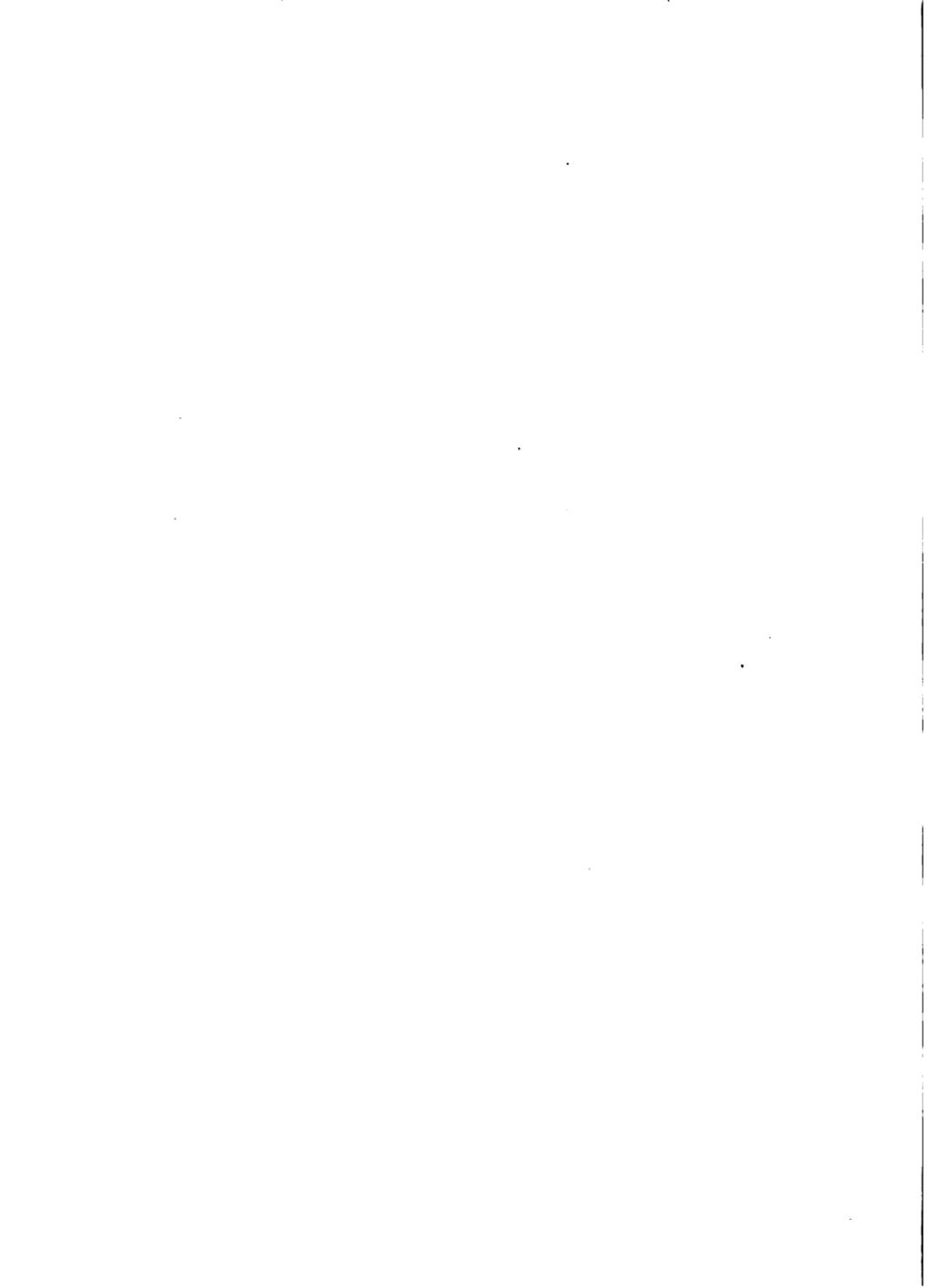
A few there be who, now and then, by dint  
Of perseverance win their way to print ;  
But then for each so chosen there must be  
Ten thousand scribbling in obscurity !  
Vain, therefore, to destroy the printed few—  
So incomplete a cure would never do ;  
The ranks, diminished only for a time,  
Would fill again with champions of rhyme,  
Who with their latest and expiring breath  
Would hail with song their swift approaching  
death !

There is no cure. We bards can never die :  
What none demand we ever must supply ;  
Our careful couplets we will fondly link  
So long as there are fountain pens and ink ;  
Unceasing we pursue our fancies' flight,  
Collect what little thoughts we have—and write,  
And with sublime indiff'rence never heed  
The fact that none (save our relations) read !

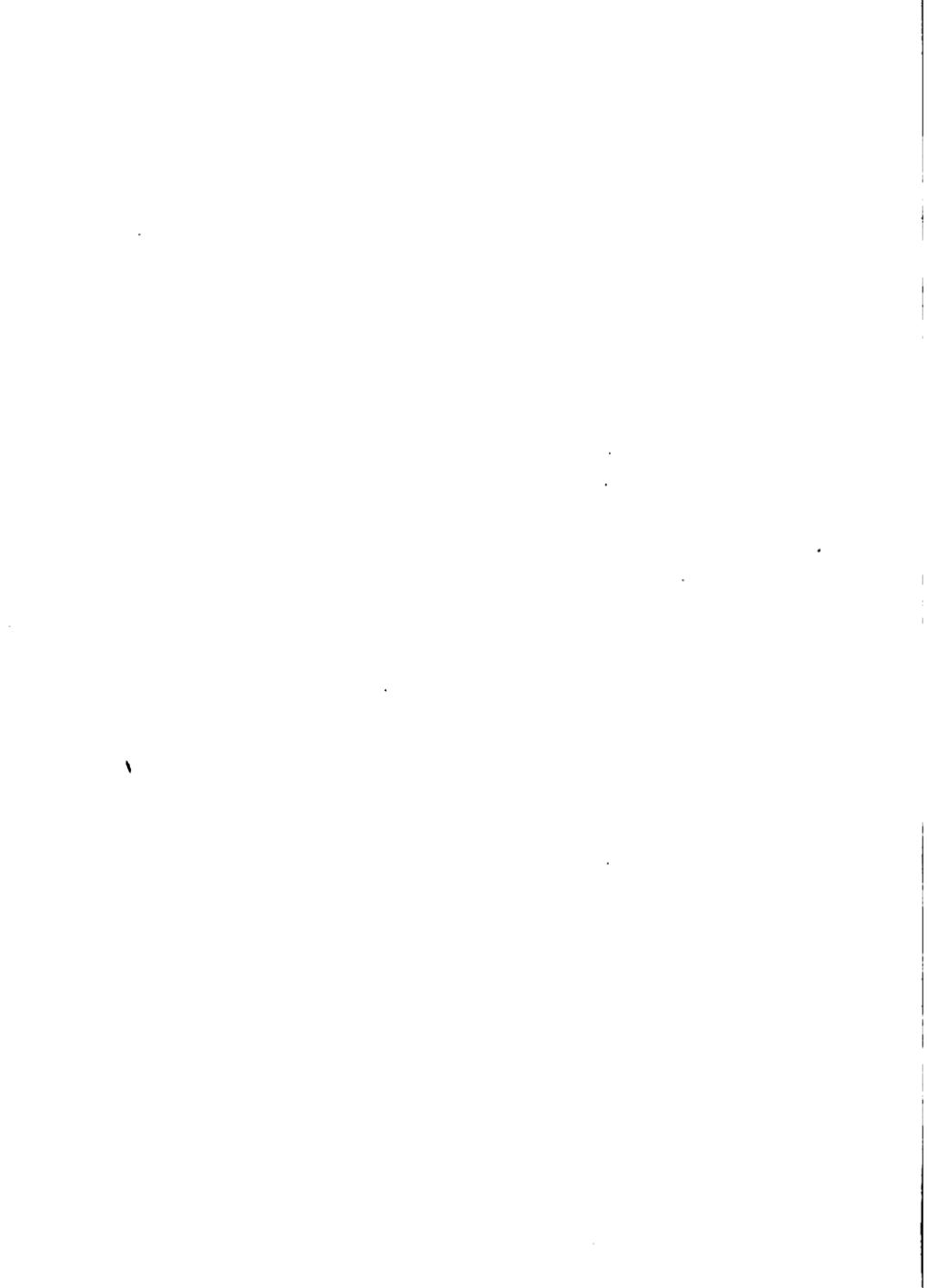
What saith the adage ? That must be endured  
Which can by no expedient be cured !

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**A DAY IN THE LIFE OF  
PHARAOH**



## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF PHARAOH

And what did chaps like Pharaoh do?  
A child I once was talking to  
Inopportunely asked ;  
And luckily enough for me  
There was no adult near to see  
My ignorance unmasked.

I never think it wise to show  
That there are things I do not know  
When speaking to the young,  
And so I tried to feel at ease  
While wayward guesses such as these  
Slipped glibly from my tongue.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

You ask how Pharaoh spent his days,  
In what variety of ways  
    His time was occupied?  
Then listen : He arose at nine,  
And, if it chanced the day were fine,  
    He breakfasted outside.

Though richly bless'd with worldly goods,  
No patent pre-digested foods  
    Were to his table borne ;  
Content with what was close at hand,  
He broke his fast, I understand,  
    Exclusively on corn.

From Joseph, as you may have read,  
The country had inherited  
    A plentiful supply,  
And "Corn in Egypt," thanks to him,  
Has since become a synonym  
    For wealth and luxury.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

This labour done, his next would be  
To view the spacious Factory,  
Wherein with joy he saw  
In each dim cell some five or six  
Unhappy Hebrews making bricks  
With insufficient straw.

Two pleasant hours would thus be spent  
With every symptom of content,  
So gladsome was the sight ;  
And as his homeward way he took,  
The oft-repeated backward look  
Betokened his delight.

Till lunch-time he would then repose,  
Stretched out upon the roof, and doze  
Or watch the placid Nile,  
In safety contemplating thus  
The cheerful hippopotamus  
And crafty crocodile.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

And if the sun with scorching ray  
Smote heavy on him as he lay,  
Obedient to his glance  
Two trembling slaves on either hand  
Enthusiastically fanned  
His heated countenance.

His lunch was scant and over soon ;  
His programme for the afternoon  
Would always be the same ;  
The hours succeeding his repast  
Were sacred to that everlasting  
Royal and Antient game !

This statement is on knowledge based,  
For golf in every age is traced  
By sure connecting links,  
And ancient tablets I have seen,  
Show Cheops "On the seventh green,"  
Or "Bunkered by the Sphinx !"

## MYTHS ABOUT MONarchs

---

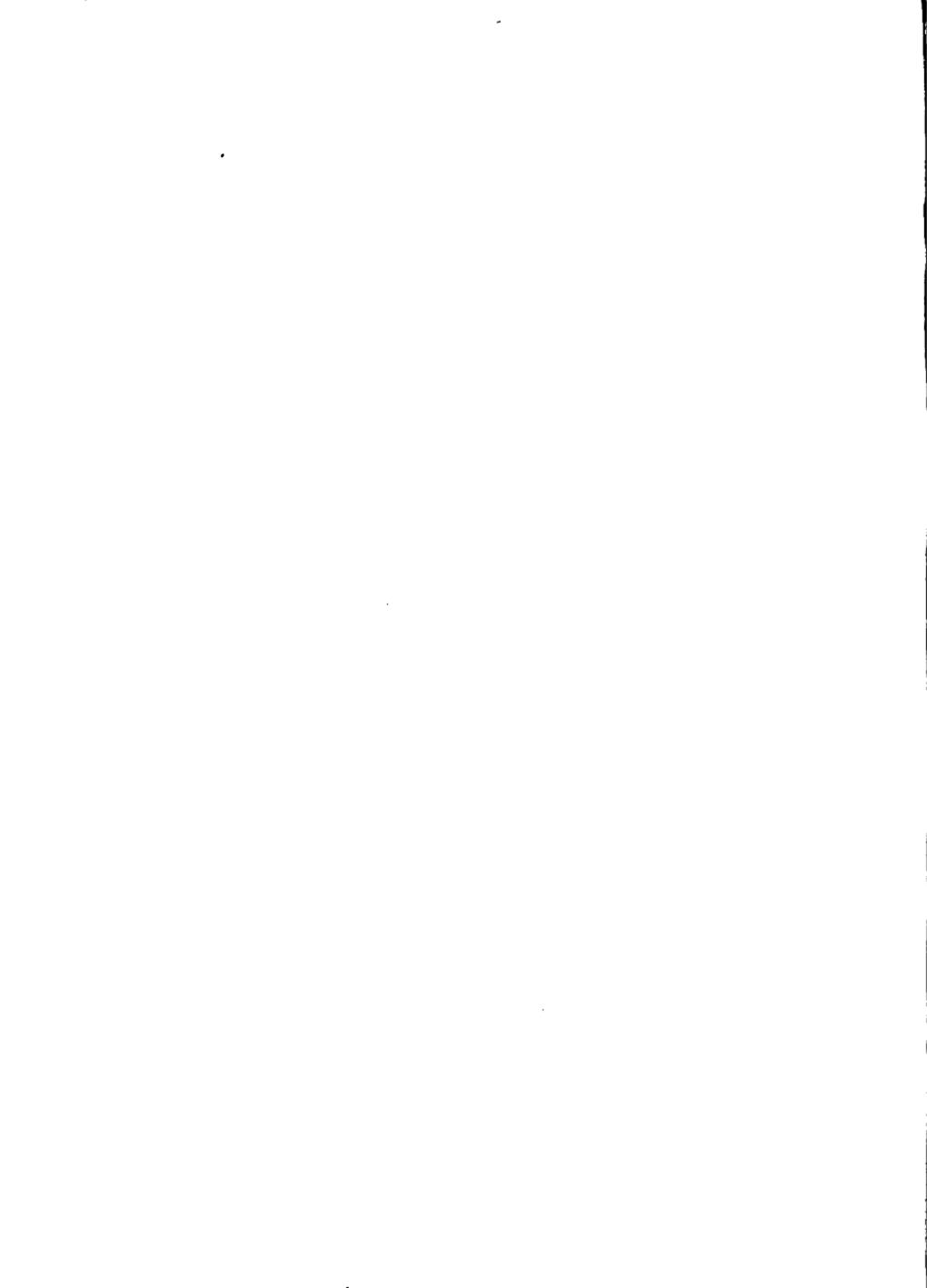
Two rounds, and then he would forsake  
His cleek, and with reluctance make  
    Another kind of tea ;  
Whereafter pressing State affairs  
Would plunge him in a sea of cares  
    And dull despondency.

Precisely on the stroke of nine  
He set aside his work to dine,  
    Of melancholy rid ;  
And Hebrew authors oft repeat  
These simple words : "The King *did eat*,"  
    With accent on the "did."

A game of draughts might then begin  
With some one who forebore to win  
    At peril of his head,  
And such I deem a sample day  
Which well entitled him to say,  
    Like Pepys : "And so to bed !"



**BUSIRIS**



## BUSIRIS

When King Busiris made a joke,  
    However puerile or crude,  
His wit was certain to evoke  
    The plaudits of the multitude.  
(For any one who failed to laugh  
Was generally torn in half.)

It has been proved beyond a doubt,  
    As certain ancient records tell,  
That in his day a dismal drought  
    Upon the land of Egypt fell.  
Nine weary years were spent in vain  
Entreaty for a shower of rain !

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

The Nile, beneath a torrid sky,  
A simple streamlet had become ;  
The monarch's wit itself ran dry,  
And jokes were at a premium.  
The few he ventured on might not  
Inaptly be described "dry rot" !

A famine followed, for the land  
Refused its wonted crops to bear ;  
The common people fed on sand,  
The King had little better fare.  
He lived on butter sparsely spread  
On crusts of Aerated Bread !

It happened that one afternoon  
A certain stranger passing by  
Was heard to say that he could soon  
The needed remedy supply.  
"Conduct me to the King," quoth he,  
"If food and water you would see."

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

Oh, what a tumult then was heard !  
They bore him breathless to the throne ;  
Their future hung upon the word  
Of this deliverer unknown.  
So great a silence fell on all  
That men distinctly heard it fall !

“O King,” he said, “most mighty lord,  
Thy troubles soon may have an end,  
Speak but the necessary word,  
And rain in plenty shall descend.  
Scorn not a sage’s sound advice  
But make a *human sacrifice!*”

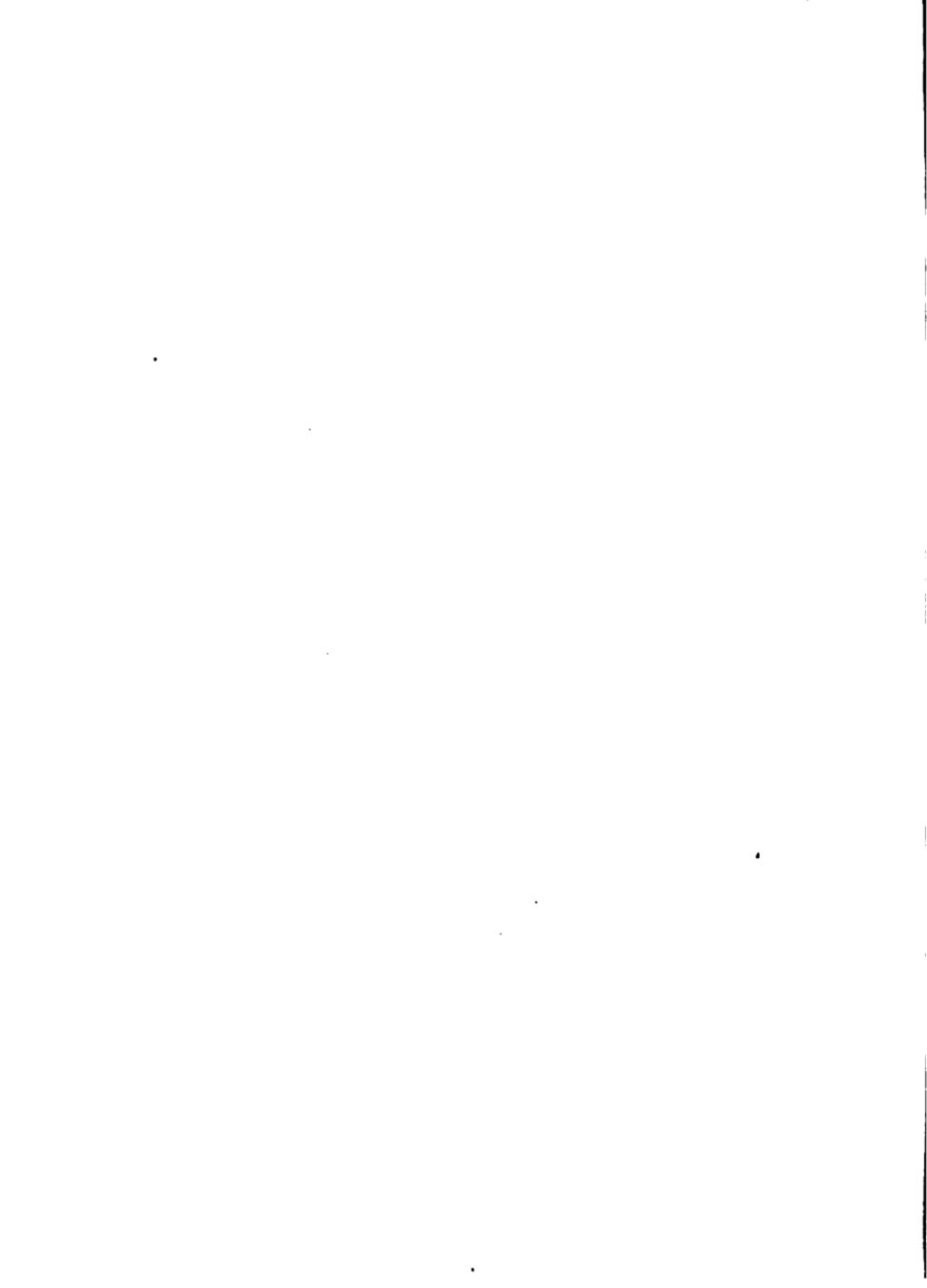
“So let it be,” the King replied ;  
“My people shall no longer thirst,  
Since you such counsel have supplied  
You surely shall be offered *first!*  
So may you win an honoured name  
And merit everlasting fame !”

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

If any word the victim spoke  
It fell unheeded in the cheers  
Which heralded the only joke  
The King had made for seven years !  
And, later, they renewed their mirth  
When rain refreshed the weary earth.

**RHAMSINITUS**



## RHAMSINITUS

Let us sing of Rhamsinitus,  
Ancient Egypt's miser king,  
For his story will delight us  
(Which is mainly why we sing) :  
Know that he amassed a treasure  
Greater far than he could count,  
Nor could any process measure  
The amount.

So he built a Safe Deposit  
For the storing of his gold,  
Of gigantic size (because it  
Had such quantities to hold).

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

Strong it seemed past all believing ;  
No one could deceit expect,  
Saving only the deceiving  
Architect.

He, a man supremely gifted  
With the wisdom of his race,  
Knew a stone which could be shifted  
From a certain vital place.  
Which contrivance, I may mention,  
As was later clearly shown,  
Was a criminal invention  
Of his own.

Often would this schemer cunning  
Thither wend his guilty flight,  
Seven times a week go running  
In the watches of the night !  
And when there his person artful  
Through the aperture would squeeze,  
Gold abstracting by the cartful  
At his ease.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONarchs

---

Thus in course of time acquiring  
Riches scaling many tons,  
He, when finally expiring,  
Left the secret to his sons,  
Who, continuing to profit  
By the monarch's boundless store,  
Made a handsome living off it  
As before.

This went on until the practice  
Dawned upon the greedy King,  
Who (the melancholy fact is)  
Swore at once like anything !  
Flew into a purple passion  
Born of impotent despair,  
And, as was the current fashion,  
Tore his hair.

Seven weeks he sat in ashes  
With a look which seemed to say :  
" Tell me where my stolen cash is—  
Who has taken it away ? "

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

Scores of overpaid magicians  
Followed every kind of clue,  
But, though many their suspicions,  
Facts were few !

Roused at last from his inaction,  
Rhamsinitus racked his brain,  
Till a gleam of satisfaction  
Overspread his face again :  
He would be his own detective,  
And the robbers' cunning meet  
With a plan at once effective  
And complete.

Furnished with a goodly number  
Of the strongest kind of gins,  
Calculated to encumber  
An intruding stranger's shins,  
He established them in places  
Where the treasure-chamber bore  
Faint incriminating traces  
On its floor !

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

Came the brothers unsuspecting,  
When the pall of night was spread,  
With the object of collecting  
Fresh supplies of daily bread.  
In they clambered, softly lighting  
On the flagstones underneath,  
Just escaping the inviting  
Rows of teeth.

In the darkness deftly groping  
Soon the younger filled his sack,  
And was stealthily eloping  
With his burden on his back,  
When, by some mischance or other,  
An inevitable trap  
Suddenly engulfed his brother  
With a snap !

Not a groan escaped the victim,  
Not a single angry word  
'Gainst the man who had thus tricked him  
In the silence could be heard.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

“Shame and death,” he said, “await me,  
For the evil I have done;  
Draw your sword—decapitate me—  
And begone.

“When they come, these plotters clever,  
And a headless captive view,  
They will be as far as ever  
From obtaining any clue.  
Therefore leave my body where it  
Well may fill them with dismay,  
But remove my head and bear it  
Far away.”

This his brother did, admitting  
That the stratagem was wise,  
Tears of sorrow, as was fitting,  
Streaming from his downcast eyes.  
Then into the night emerging  
Home he took his way again,  
Schemes for retribution surging  
In his brain.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

Certain he was now in sight of  
A significant success,  
Rhamsinitus passed a night of  
Quite unwonted wakefulness.  
Wherefore it is not surprising,  
Lacking as he did repose,  
That what time the sun was rising  
He, too, rose.

With his mind on vengeance centred,  
To his treasure-house he sped,  
Opened wide the door and entered,  
Staggered back discomfited !  
And he surely must be pitied  
In his overwhelming grief,  
He, a king, to be outwitted  
By a thief !

Home he fled as one who dashes  
To a dentist when in pain,  
Ordered fresh supplies of ashes,  
Rent his raven locks again.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

Which supreme humiliation  
Bred ere many hours had passed  
Just as good an inspiration  
As the last.

"Doubtless," so he argued, "dozens  
Of his relatives will come,  
Uncles, aunts, and second cousins,  
Some alone—in parties some :  
And if these shall see him lying  
In his present parlous state,  
They will not refrain from sighing  
At his fate."

So he hung the mutilated  
Body to the outer wall,  
Adequately elevated  
Where it could be seen by all.  
Kept by trusted guards and daring,  
With instructions to arrest  
Any passer-by whose bearing  
Seemed depressed !

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

Lo ! an aged merchant passes,  
Driving in a single line  
Seven heavy-laden asses  
Bearing skins of ruby wine !  
Suddenly a mighty rushing  
Rouses him as from a dream  
Out the wine pours in a gushing,  
Crimson stream !

Which phenomenon perceiving,  
Every guard forsook his post,  
One and all their duty leaving  
Joined each other in a toast.  
Ripping open every skinful  
To the owner's deep distress,  
Till they lay in senseless, sinful  
Drunkenness !

But the merchant, showing traces  
Of a strange, ecstatic glee,  
Shaved one side of all their faces  
With supreme dexterity !

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

Not a single right-hand whisker  
That escaped his razor keen :  
Never, surely, was a brisker  
Barber seen !

Next with fitting care he laid them  
Heel to head and side by side,  
Murmuring, as he survey'd them  
With a pardonable pride,  
"Fast asleep you lie, yet faster  
Shall your slumber be, I fear,  
When that cunning king, your master,  
Finds you here !"

Then the thief (he was none other  
Than our treasure-seeking friend)  
Cut the cords which bound his brother,  
Caused his body to descend.  
Very skilfully he caught it  
Ere it fell upon the ground,  
And in triumph homeward brought it  
Safe and sound !

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

When this sorry situation  
    He had leisure to digest,  
Rage succumbed to admiration  
    In the monarch's manly breast.  
Pardon to the thief he tendered  
    Per the *Memphis Weekly Times*,  
And forgot the loss engendered  
    By his crimes.

So the robber made confession,  
    Telling everything he knew,  
Being under the impression  
    It would pay him so to do.  
Whereupon he was rewarded  
    With a fair princess's hand,  
And exalted rank accorded  
    In the land.

Covered thus with gilded glory  
    We will bid him fond farewell ;  
Trusting only that the story  
    We have humbly tried to tell

## **MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS**

---

**May be found a source of pleasure  
And a satisfaction bring  
More enduring than the treasure  
Of the King !**

**CYRUS**



## CYRUS

No man of learning will dispute  
What History has handed down,  
That Cyrus loved his silver flute  
More dearly than his golden crown.  
When not engaged in State affairs  
He played the most entrancing airs.

And once while strolling by the sea  
There came to him the sudden wish  
To test his great ability  
Upon the unoffending fish.  
He thought it probable that they  
Would come ashore to hear him play.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

He piped his most seductive strain,  
And swept the sea with eager glance,  
Piped all the tunes he knew, in vain !  
The fish were not inclined to dance.  
In deep disgust the monarch rose  
And brought his concert to a close.

A week elapsed, and back he went,  
Still harbouring intense regret,  
And lo ! two fishermen, intent  
On taking herring from a net ;  
They whistled merrily the while  
Their hours of labour to beguile.

The monarch looked and rubbed his eyes,  
Such wonder did the sight afford,  
For with unparalleled surprise  
He saw the fish with one accord  
Leaping and dancing on the sand  
(As fishes do when brought to land).

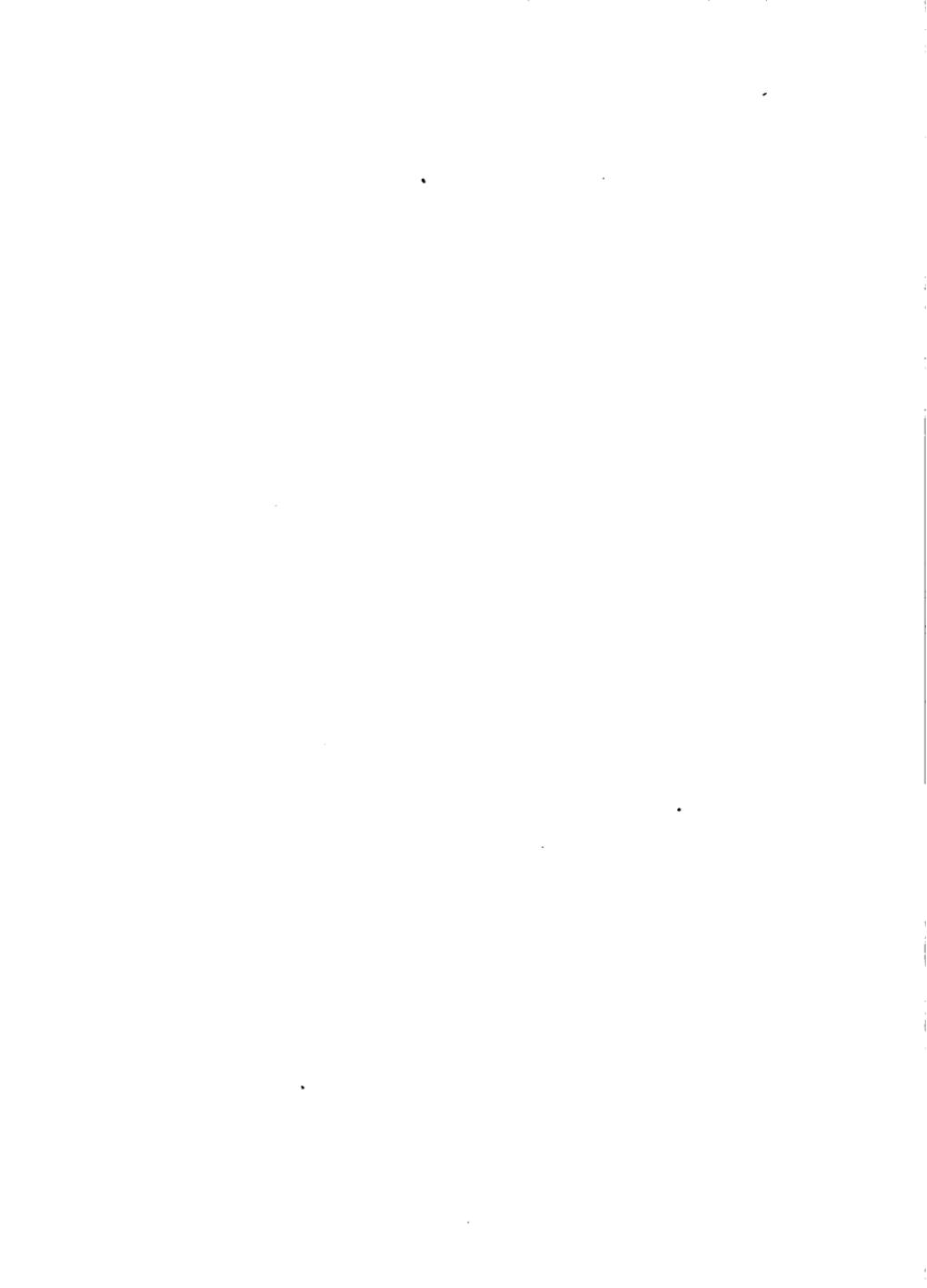
## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

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“Ho ! ho !” he cried, “these wretched slaves  
    Need whistle but a bar or two,  
And fish by hundreds leave the waves  
    Which for myself they would not do.  
Now by the throne which I adorn  
‘Twere better they had not been born !”

Then swiftly from his robe he took  
    His silver flute and struck an air,  
The fishermen turned round to look,  
    And trembled, seeing who was there.  
And then they heard his mandate ring :  
“Dance, villains !” roared the angry King.

And dance they did with main and might,  
    Revolving, leaping to and fro,  
Hour after hour till fall of night  
    They tripped the light fantastic toe.  
Nor was it till they fainting fell  
That Cyrus cried : “Enough ! ‘Tis well.”



**NECHO**

**D**



## NECHO

Six days did Necho, King of Egypt, think,  
Refusing either nourishment or drink ;  
Then, having thoroughly matured his plans,  
Commanded : " Bring me some Phœnicians ! "

To whom : " Good Mariners," the monarch said,  
" Unending glory shall on you be shed,  
If round this Libya you make a trip,  
And circumnavigate it in a ship."

" Great Pharaoh," they made answer, " we obey,  
Nor do thy servants feel the least dismay."  
Then, eager for the quest, they hoisted sail,  
South-wafted by a favourable gale.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

Their progress for a time was passing good,  
Yet as the months went by their stock of food  
Grew daily, to their infinite distress,  
"Fine by degrees, and beautifully less!"

Perceiving which they were constrained to land,  
Against their will, on Afric's barren strand ;  
Much seed they scattered, nor set sail again  
Until they gathered in the golden grain.

Three years they journey'd, and thrice reaped  
their corn,  
Yet were their easy tempers little worn ;  
Southward they sailed, then westward with the  
sun,  
Then north and east and lo ! their task was  
done.

King Necho met them in the homeward reach,  
And gave them greeting as they press'd the  
beach,  
Plied them with eager questioning if they  
Had witnessed any wonder by the way ?

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

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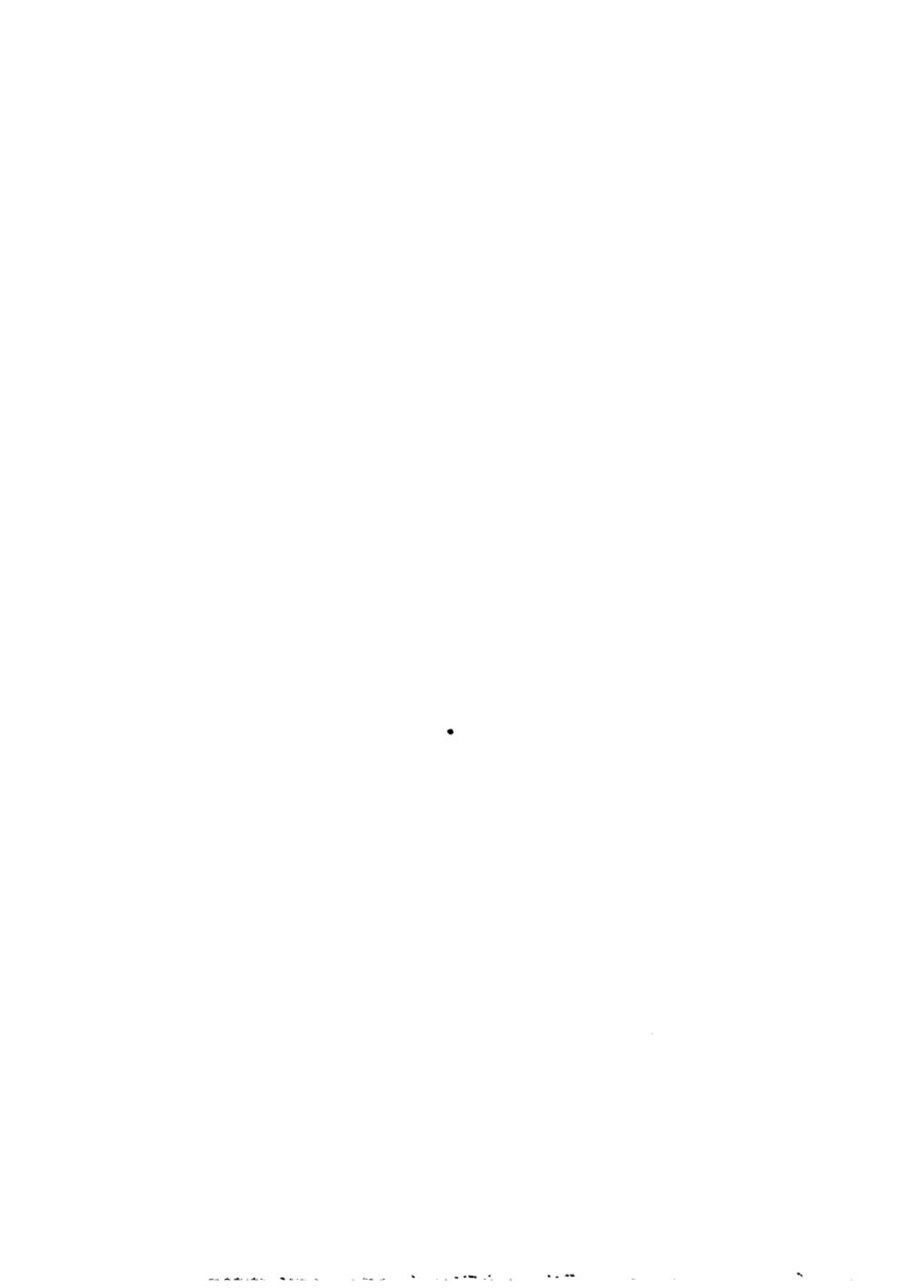
“O King,” they cried, “in wisdom unexcel’d,  
One great and solemn wonder we beheld ;  
For in a distant corner of this land  
Thy servants saw *the sun on their right hand!*”

“ Impossible,” the King replied ; “you rave,  
Good sailors though you be and passing brave.”  
Whereat th’ intrepid mariners bent low,  
Yet still persisted : “It was even so !”

“Some vices,” said the King, “may have their  
cure,  
But boasting liars I will not endure ;  
Let these,” he ordered, “instantly be slain,  
Lest haply they should live to lie again !”



**CRŒSUS**



## CRÆSUS

Now Crœsus was the kind of King  
Who took the greatest care,  
When he was doing anything,  
No matter what or where,  
To see that he was more or less  
Assured of ultimate success.

Pre-eminently this was so  
Ere he to battle went,  
He took the greatest pains to know  
The probable event :  
Consulting oracles to see  
If they could promise victory.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

And very early in his reign  
    He organised a test,  
By which he hoped to ascertain  
    What oracle was best.  
Some twenty shrines there may have been,  
And competition thus was keen.

Selecting, therefore, twenty men,  
    He sent a man to each ;  
He told them what to say, and when  
    To make their little speech.  
“At noon on Saturday !” he cried,  
“Ask how the King is occupied !”

The day arrived, the monarch sought  
    An underground retreat ;  
“No one can see me here,” he thought,  
    “My ambush is complete.”  
And then he set himself to do  
The most unlikely thing he knew.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

A young and tender lamb he got,  
And boiled it, wool and all ;  
Inserting, as he stirred the pot,  
One tortoise, cut up small.  
" The one that fathoms this," cried he,  
" Shall be the oracle for me ! "

The messengers returned and made  
Each man his own reply ;  
Yet only one of them display'd  
The least sagacity.  
At Delphi, to the King's delight,  
The local Zancig answered right !

You may (and doubtless will) believe  
This tale to be untrue ;  
I shall not personally grieve  
If you adopt that view.  
Indeed, I hasten to express  
My own complete distrustfulness !



**CAMBYSES**



## CAMBYES

Cambyses, one of Persia's kings,  
Resembled Nero in his ways,  
Rejoicing much in torturings  
And murders on alternate days.  
Supreme delight he could derive  
From prisoners interr'd alive !

Yet no one ventured to protest  
Or grumble at the monarch's fun,  
The populace kept silence, lest  
By speaking they should be undone,  
Till Croesus to remonstrate came  
And boldly dared to cry "For shame!"

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

“Preach not to me,” Cambyses said ;  
“Your words convince me not at all.”  
The nimble Croesus ducked his head—  
The arrow quivered in the wall ;  
And ere another could be sent  
The human target rose and went.

And yet, though something fleet of limb,  
Not long protracted was the chase,  
Swift messengers surrounded him  
And clasped him in a tight embrace.  
It was, they said, Cambyses’ will  
That, having captured, they should kill !

But if, they argued, morning came  
And brought repentance to their lord,  
Instead of meriting his blame  
They might receive a rich reward  
If they their captive could display  
As sound as when he ran away.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

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And even so it came to pass,  
Cambyses mourned his hasty act,  
He rent his garments till, alas !  
No single thread remained intact.  
(A habit which the Persians had  
Whenever they were feeling sad.)

Great therefore was his joy to find  
His regal guest alive and well,  
Delight and gratitude combined  
His former sorrow to expel ;  
Yet on his servants standing by  
He cast but a revengeful eye.

Nor had they leisure long to quake,  
For, with their feet securely bound,  
Within the ornamental lake  
He had them severally drowned.  
Thus proving how unwise a thing  
It was to disobey the King !



# **POLYCRATES**



## POLYCRATES

When long ago the world was young,  
And Golf and Vanguards were unknown,  
When Ancient Britons ranked among  
The products of an Age of stone,  
There dwelt awhile in Samos' Isle  
A King who wore a chronic smile !

Polycrates, of whom I sing,  
The hero of this ancient myth,  
Had doubtless been as good a King  
If he had borne the name of Smith ;  
As Jones or Brown, his gilded crown  
Would have secured him like renown.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

But I digress. This worthy man  
Was prosperous in all he did,  
His bank account was vaster than  
The vastest kind of pyramid.  
He simply rolled in wealth untold  
And wallowed in excess of gold !

Now Amasis of Egypt viewed  
Success so uniformly great  
With such extreme disquietude  
As made him grow disconsolate.  
His appetite was put to flight  
And sleepless was his couch at night !

But seeing that they were allied  
He planned and plotted night and day  
To stem the force of Fortune's tide,  
Or make it flow some other way.  
Luck so unending must portend  
(He argued) an abysmal end.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

And so one day, while in the thick  
Of onerous affairs of State,  
Polycrates received a brick  
Presented on a golden plate.

"A letter!" he remarked, "for me;  
From whom, I wonder, can it be?"

A letter? Yes, for be it known  
That in that dim and distant day  
Men wrote with chisels upon stone  
And sculptured all they had to say.  
The skilful dint on polished flint  
Was more enduring far than print.

The library was not the spot  
For those who liked to choose and pick,  
Since novels of the time were not  
Unlike so many tons of brick.  
The very few there were on view  
Gave readers quite enough to do.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

But to resume. Polycrates  
Perused his letter to the end ;  
The pictures did not seem to please,  
But manifestly to offend.  
Herodotus has given us  
A somewhat free translation—thus :

*"Polycrates, if tales are true  
Concerning all that you possess,  
I needs must take a dismal view  
Of such extravagant success.  
For wealth so vast and made so fast  
Must bring catastrophe at last !*

*"A remedy I would suggest,  
A simple if a painful plan :  
Select what thing you value best  
And lose it, where the hand of man  
Can never more its form restore  
However deeply it explore.*

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

*"And if my friendship you would keep,  
Fear not to make this timely stitch,  
That so you may not live to reap  
The fruits of that good fortune which  
I frankly thirst to see reversed—  
Yours truly, AMASIS I."*

Although inclined to take offence,  
Polycrates could not deny  
That counsel from a man of sense  
Should be obeyed implicitly.  
The danger might perhaps be slight,  
But what if Amasis were right !

Persuaded, then, the plan was sound  
As coming from a friendly King,  
He searched his collar-drawer and found  
A large and lustrous ruby ring.  
Then mournfully he put to sea,  
As ill at ease as he could be.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

The gem was sunk ten fathoms deep,  
And disappeared from mortal gaze.  
The King refused to eat or sleep  
For seventeen successive days.  
Nor bite nor sup nor foaming cup  
Had any power to cheer him up.

And now a knocking grim and great,  
Delivered by no trembling hand,  
Was heard upon the palace gate  
(The tradesman's entrance, understand).  
A man was there whose frenzied air  
Betokened some occurrence rare.

A fisherman he was by trade  
Who now exhibiting his prize  
Before the astonished cook displayed  
A turbot of gigantic size ;  
A fish whose weight I hesitate  
To guess or even estimate.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONarchs

---

"Though poor," he said, "I gladly bring  
The fruit of this my record cast,  
That haply it may tempt the King  
To break his long-protracted fast."  
Which said, he went away content  
With pence and much advertisement.

The cook, assisted by his wife  
Whose aid he had petitioned for,  
Attacked the turbot with his knife,  
And lo ! in its interior—  
(Words scarce convey what I would say)  
The monarch's ring uninjured lay !

And then and there and as he was  
That cook ran headlong to the King,  
Exceeding jubilant because  
He was the finder of the ring.  
He deemed his lord would well reward  
The man who had his gem restored !

## MYTHS ABOUT MONarchs

---

The monarch gave a startled cry,  
And then his face grew still more sad ;  
He sooner would have said good-bye  
To every other ring he had  
Than bear the pain and mental strain  
Of seeing this one back again.

“Alas !” he cried, “who can deny  
That mine is but a sorry state ?  
One cannot alter Destiny  
Or wage a winning war with Fate !  
And it were vain to strive again  
Or open up a new campaign.”

Though I of course could tell you how  
Polycrates was doomed to die,  
Such details matter little now  
And make but dismal history.  
Enough to say that from that day  
He view'd the future with dismay !

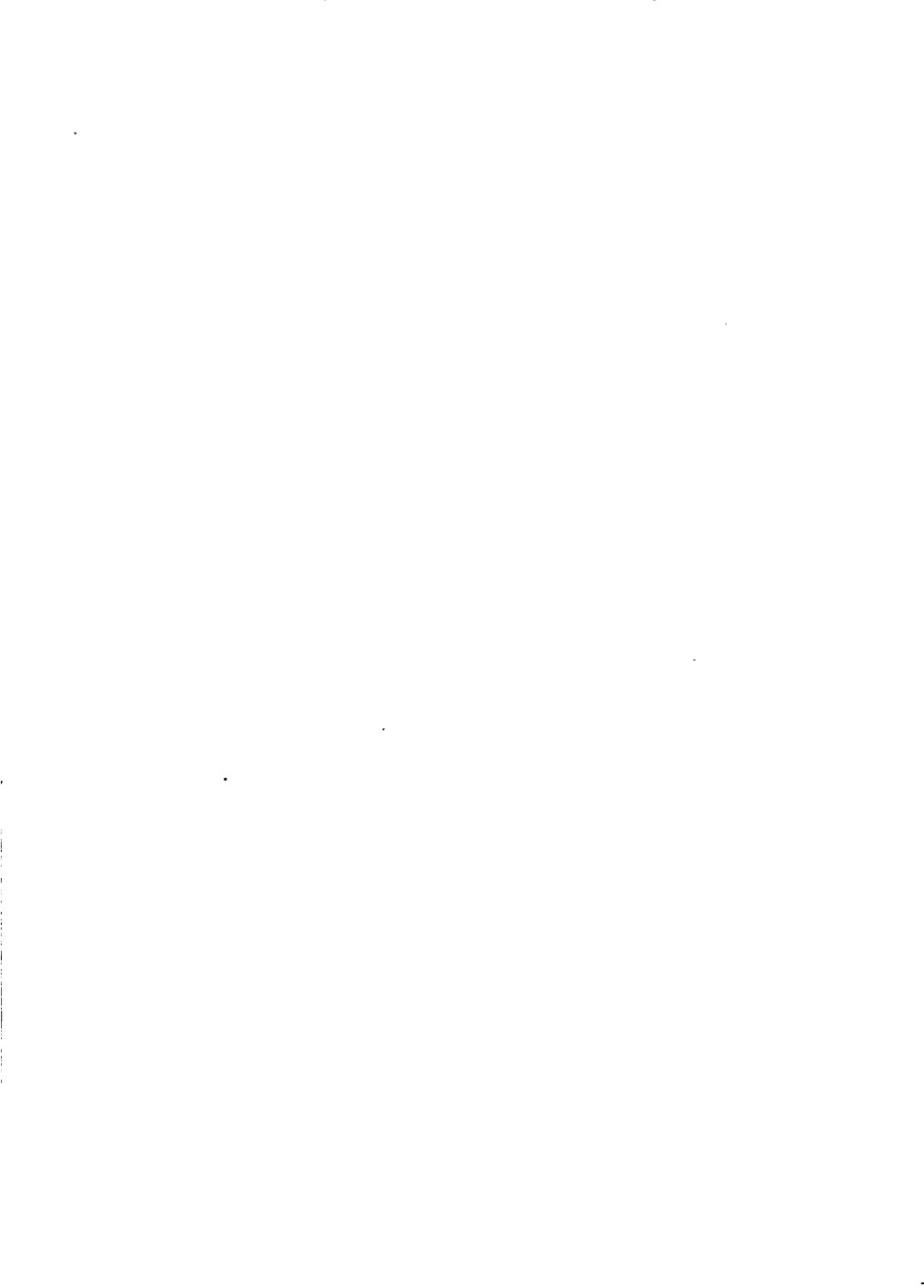
## **MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS**

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Not so the fisherman who sold  
The turbot to the palace cook.  
Above his shop some words of gold,  
Well seen by all who cared to look,  
Announced that he henceforth would be  
“PURVEYOR TO HIS MAJESTY !”



**DARIUS**



## DARIUS

The curious with one accord  
Made haste to throng the public square,  
For King Darius, Persia's lord,  
Was holding Quarter Sessions there.  
He had before him at the time  
(By various accusers led)  
A certain man to whom the crime  
Of murder was attributed.

Darius, having heard them all,  
Both prosecution and defence,  
Condemned the luckless criminal  
On circumstantial evidence.

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

And since a trifling sprain debarr'd  
Himself from walking much about,  
He sent the Captain of his Guard  
To see the sentence carried out.

Now, as they neared the place of death  
They saw one running from afar,  
Begrim'd with dust and scant of breath,  
Yet generally jocular.

"I am the murdered man," he cried,  
"And ample evidence can bring  
To prove that I have never died—  
Come back and let us tell the King!"

So back they gladly went and gained  
A further hearing of the case ;  
The Captain of the Guard explained  
Precisely what had taken place.  
Yet all his fine forensic skill  
No pity in the King awoke,  
Who, rising, bade the Court be still  
And thus his final judgment spoke :

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

“Oh, Persians, hearken unto me  
And hear how justice shall be done :  
Three executions shall you see  
In place of your expected one.  
The prisoner must surely die,  
Because a Persian monarch's word,  
Once pledged, can not be altered by  
Events which may have since occurr'd.

“The man-at-arms who disobeys  
Instructions definite and clear,  
The price of such rebellion pays  
By terminating his career !  
Let, then, this Captain of the Guard  
Henceforth be numbered with the dead,  
Nor can we deem the sentence hard  
Which parts his body from his head !”

Then last the man reported slain  
Was sent to join the other two ;  
“Your crime,” the King observed, “is plain—  
These people owe their deaths to you !

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

For had you never lived," he cried,  
"This hapless pair had now been free,  
This case would never have been tried  
Nor soiled the page of History!"

## **THE SACRED CHICKENS**



## THE SACRED CHICKENS

Before a Roman risked a fight  
With any foreign naval foe,  
He deemed it prudent to invite  
The aid of Neptune, Mars and Co. ;  
And as the Gods approved or banned  
He put to sea or stayed on land.]

Attached to every Roman fleet  
Were Chickens, sacred from their birth,  
And victory or dire defeat  
(With corresponding gloom or mirth)  
Depended only on the mood  
In which the Chickens faced their food !

## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

---

For if with normal appetite  
They fell upon each fresh supply,  
The omens were considered bright  
And indicated victory.  
But if the fowls refused to eat,  
A battle simply meant defeat !

The story I shall now relate  
Concerns a certain Consul who,  
Though seemingly unfortunate,  
If all we hear of him is true,  
Was none the less a man of grit  
And furnished with a ready wit.

“To-night,” he said, “we will surprise  
The Carthage fleet in yonder bay”—  
The Roman navy rubbed its eyes  
In wonder mingled with dismay.  
The night was dark, their ships were few,  
And numbered less than one to two !

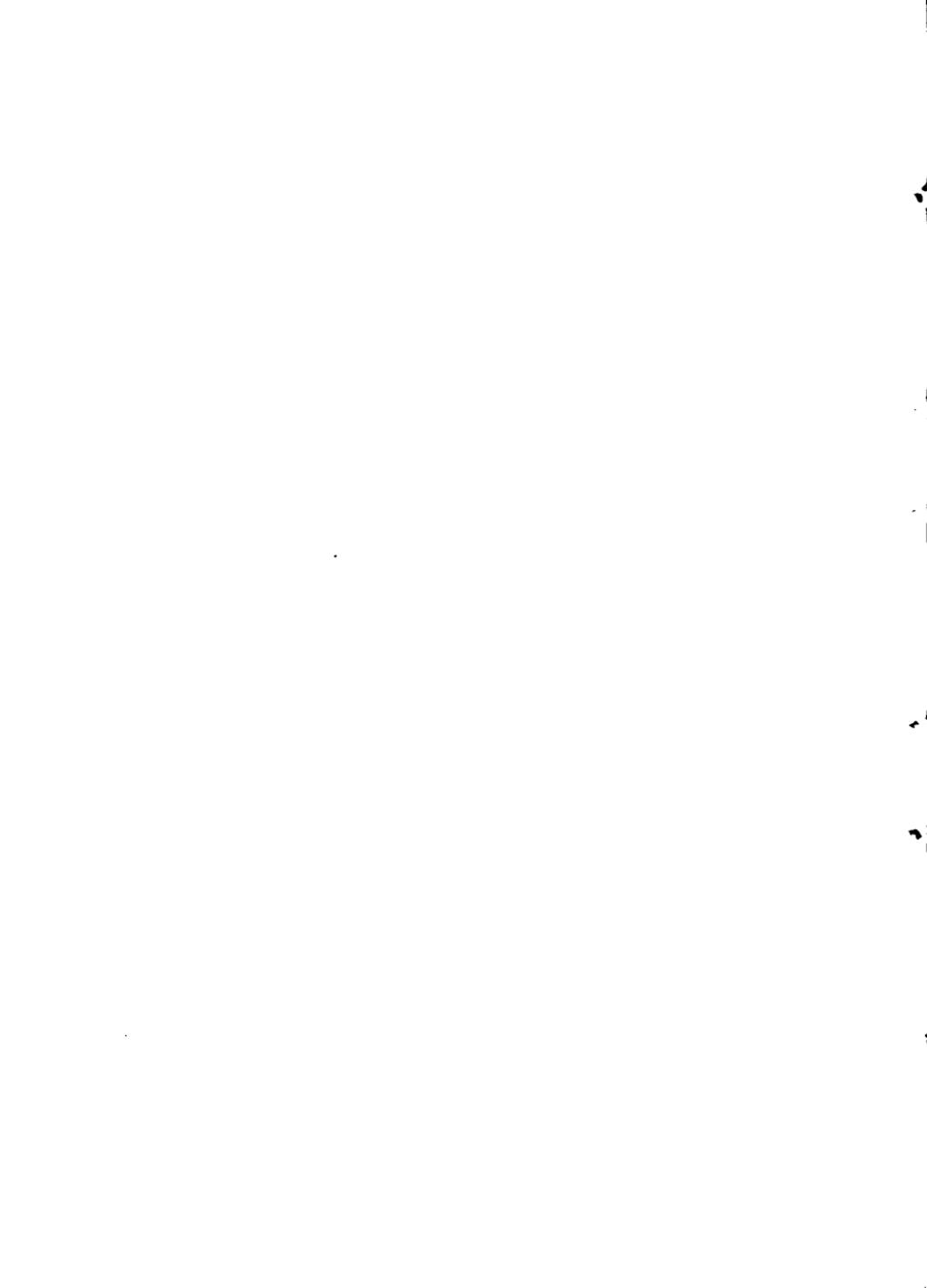
## MYTHS ABOUT MONARCHS

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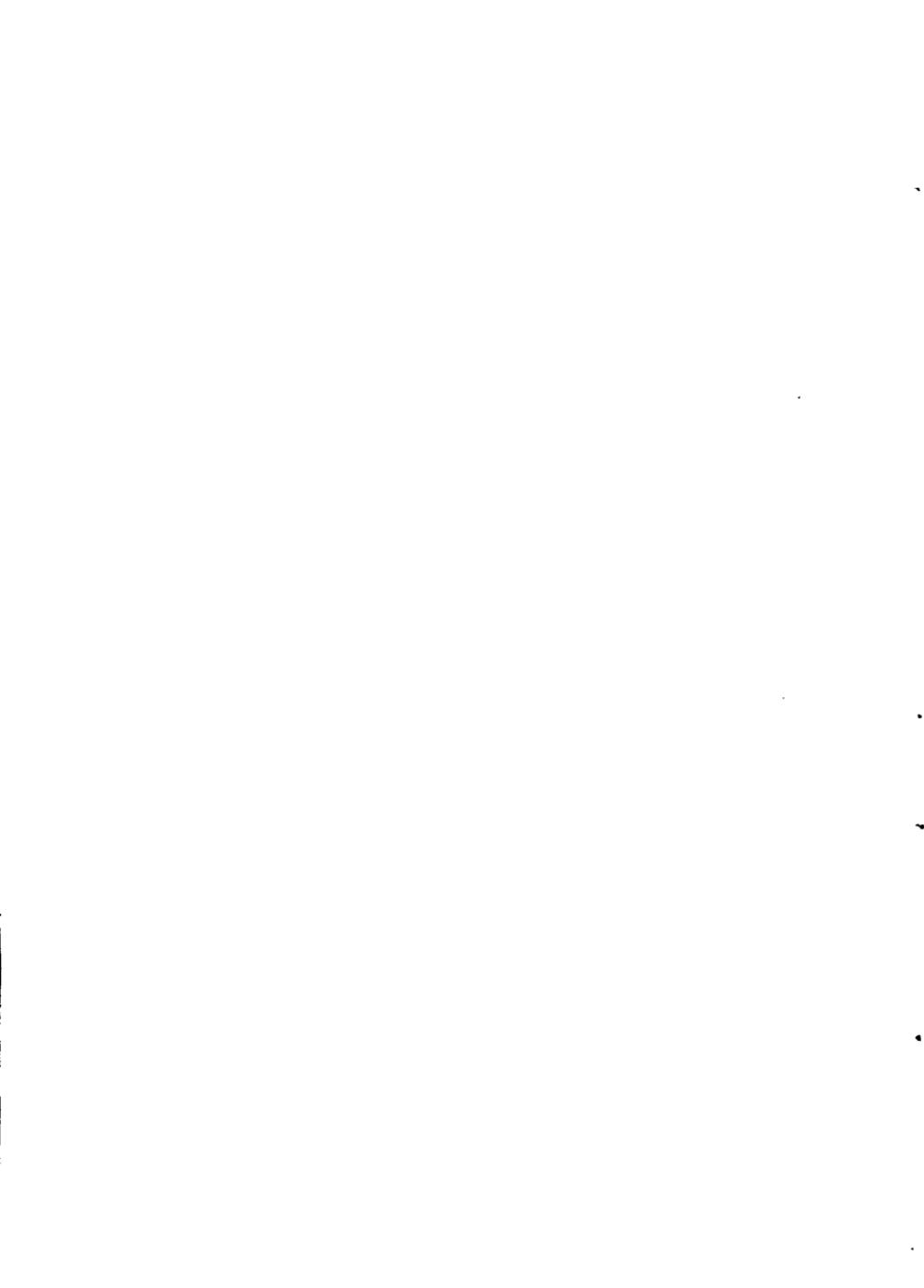
And while with soft persuasive word  
They sought to set his plan aside,  
The Chicken-Keeper's voice was heard,  
That voice which could not be denied :  
"O Consul, do not court defeat,  
*The Sacred Chickens will not eat !*"

Mere words could not ambition quell,  
Nor omens make that Consul shrink ;  
"They will not eat, you say. 'Tis well,  
Then let the stupid creatures drink ;"  
And, laughing with a fiendish glee,  
He hurled them all into the sea !

The Chickens sank. The briny wave  
For ever stemmed their appetite ;  
The sporting Consul shared their grave  
A little later in the night.  
And Carthage sent the message home—  
"Sensational defeat of Rome !"



**TO THE CRITIC**



## TO THE CRITIC

My task is done, and I have but to learn  
Your verdict and my own uncertain fate ;  
Then, gentle critic, do not hesitate  
Th' expectant poet's gratitude to earn.  
Does not your kindly heart within you burn  
To prove to me your wisdom, while I wait  
With breathless eagerness to hear you state  
What little excellence you may discern ?

Give, then, your verdict ; tell me here and now  
If it be good or ill, abuse or praise :  
To your impartial ruling I must bow,  
And needs must weep if you condemn my lays.  
Shall sombre sackcloth press my pensive brow,  
Or verdant and imperishable bays ?

Printed by **BALLANTYNE & Co. LIMITED**  
**Tavistock Street, London**

